

Start of production of stamped pieces

Especially after the Mukden Incident of 1931, as the war expanded, the demand for shogi pieces increased rapidly as they were often offered as condolence gifts. In Tendo, calligraphed pieces were produced at full capacity, including the production of military pieces (kōgun shogi), which was invented at the end of the Meiji era. On the other hand, Osaka merchants also devised and produced stamped pieces called oshikoma, but they could not meet the growing demand, so they turned to Tendo to handle their manufacture. However, Osaka could not compete with the Tendo, where the pieces were made at lower costs, leading to all the production of shogi pieces to move there. As the notoriety of Tendo-made pieces spread all over Japan, the industry reached its peak from the postwar period to the 1950s. In terms of quantity, most of the production was for stamped pieces and painted pieces (in regular script), but it gradually increased for carved pieces. In addition to conventional materials such as Japanese whitebark magnolia, styrax obassia, painted maple, and Hamilton's spindletree, new materials such as redvein maple and Siamese boxwood are also used. Demand was increased by offering products in various price ranges. However, after the first oil crisis in 1974, there was a delay in responding to the needs of the general public, which were oriented toward high quality, and the purchasing cycle was extended due to the spread of carved pieces. Tendo being known as an area for mass-produced low-grade pieces tarnished its image, resulting in a decreasing demand and rapid decline in the production of stamped and drawn pieces. Along with this, the utilization rate of the machinery and equipment of woodworkers has decreased, and some of them have been discarded. Pieces in Tendo's traditional cursive calligraphy were not made at all for a while, but in recent years, the taste for cursive script has been revived, and now such tradition is continued, albeit just for a small quantity of pieces. Carved pieces now account for 70% of the production, but 90% of them are carved by machine while the number of hand carvers has decreased just to a few remaining.